

DATELINE NO. 111 WASHINGTON
ALINA ZERANSKI

SEPTEMBER 15, 1976

A GRASSROOTS PRESSURE GROUP:
THE MCLEAN CITIZENS ASSOCIATION
(INSERTS IN TAPE LIBRARY)

ANNCR: DATELINE: WASHINGTON -- PICTURES IN SOUND OF PEOPLE, PLACES AND EVENTS IN AND AROUND THE NATION'S CAPITAL -- BROUGHT TO YOU BY THE VOICE OF AMERICA EACH WEEK AT THIS TIME. TODAY, A REPORT PREPARED BY ALINA ZERANSKI ABOUT HOW A CITIZENS GROUP MAKES ITS VOICE HEARD IN MATTERS AFFECTING THE COMMUNITY.

NARR: JOHN SMITH WANTED TO OPEN A GASOLINE FILLING STATION IN MCLEAN, VIRGINIA, AN AFFLUENT COMMUNITY OF 44 THOUSAND PEOPLE SOME 15 KILOMETERS WEST OF WASHINGTON D.C. IT SEEMED AN IDEAL LOCATION TO SMITH SO IT CAME AS A SURPRISE WHEN HE WAS REFUSED A LICENSE BY COUNTY OFFICIALS. IT WAS EXPLAINED TO SMITH THAT THE MCLEAN CITIZENS ASSOCIATION, WORKING HAND IN HAND WITH THE BUSINESS AND PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATION, HAD ARGUED AGAINST IT. THE FAIRFAX COUNTY GOVERNMENT HAD BEEN INFORMED BY THOSE GROUPS THAT THE RESIDENTS OF MCLEAN BELIEVED THERE WERE ENOUGH GAS STATIONS TO HANDLE THE NEED. MISTER SMITH WAS TURNED DOWN.

TAPE: CUT ONE -- STELL

"THE MCLEAN CITIZENS ASSOCIATION HAS ABOUT 600 MEMBERS, AND THEY REPRESENT 600 FAMILIES IN MCLEAN WHO TAKE CIVIC INTEREST IN WHAT'S HAPPENING IN THE AREA AND PAY THEIR DUES TO THE MCLEAN'S CITIZENS ASSOCIATION AND PARTICIPATE IN OUR CONTACTS WITH OUR LOCAL GOVERNMENTS. MOST OF THEM ARE HOUSE-HOLDERS, MANY OF THEM WORK FOR THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT, FOR MCLEAN IS IN THE SUBURBS OF WASHINGTON, D.C. SOME OF THEM ARE BUSINESSMEN LIKE MYSELF...OR WORK FOR OTHER INDUSTRY IN THE AREA. THEY ARE PRIVATE CITIZENS FOR THE MOST PART."

NARR: THAT WAS WILLIAM STELL, OWNER OF A SMALL INSURANCE AGENCY AND PRESIDENT OF THE MCLEAN CITIZENS ASSOCIATION. HE HAS BEEN LIVING AND WORKING HERE FOR TWENTY YEARS. MCLEAN EVOLVED FROM SMALL GROUPS OF SUMMER COTTAGES BUILT IN THE BEGINNING OF THE CENTURY. THE CITIZENS ASSOCIATION WAS FOUNDED IN 1914 AND IS ONE OF THE OLDEST ORGANIZATIONS OF ITS KIND ON THE EAST COAST. THE ASSOCIATION GREW IN SIZE AND IMPORTANCE WITH THE COMMUNITY. TODAY, IT SERVES AN IMPORTANT ROLE AS THE REPRESENTATIVE OF COMMUNITY INTERESTS IN DEALINGS WITH LOCAL AND STATE GOVERNMENTS.

TAPE: CUT TWO -- STELL

"MCLEAN IS NOT A TOWN IN A SENSE THAT WE HAVE A MAYOR OR A CITY COUNCIL. WE ARE NOT INCORPORATED, WE ARE JUST A PLACE IN FAIRFAX COUNTY WHICH IS VERY LARGE. AND WE HAVE OUR LITTLE TOWN INTERESTS, SO TO SPEAK, THAT WE WANT TO FOLLOW UP ON. WE WANT OUR COUNTY GOVERNMENT TO LISTEN TO THE PEOPLE IN THIS PARTICULAR AREA OF THE COUNTY, SO THEY KNOW WHAT OUR WISHES ARE. FOR EXAMPLE, WE HAVE A VERY ACTIVE COMMITTEE ON PLANNING AND ZONING SO THAT ON ANY NEW CONSTRUCTION THAT TAKES PLACE OR IS PROPOSED FOR THE AREA, WHETHER IT WILL BE RESIDENTIAL OR COMMERCIAL, CITIZENS HAVE AN OPPORTUNITY TO LET THE COUNTY GOVERNMENT KNOW WHAT OUR WISHES ARE."

NARR: SOMETIMES THERE ARE DISAGREEMENTS BETWEEN THE HOME OWNERS AND BUSINESSMEN WHO WANT TO EXPAND COMMERCIAL VENTURES IN RESIDENTIAL AREAS. THE HOME OWNERS WISH TO KEEP THE RURAL CHARACTER OF THE COMMUNITY AND RESTRICT THE DENSITY OF NEW HOUSING. THE BUSINESSMEN THINK THAT THE MORE PEOPLE, THE BETTER BUSINESS WILL BE. HOT ARGUMENTS TAKE PLACE AT THE CITIZENS MEETINGS BEFORE A DECISION, OFTEN A COMPROMISE IS REACHED.

TAPE: CUT THREE -- STELL

"THE OUTSTANDING ZONING CASE, I GUESS, IS THE MATTER OF THE MCLEAN HOUSE WHICH IS THE FIRST HIGH RISE APARTMENT BUILDING TO BE BUILT IN MCLEAN. THE DEVELOPERS INITIALLY WANTED SOMETHING LIKE EIGHTEEN STORIES AND OVER A THOUSAND UNITS, AND BY VIRTUE OF NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE DEVELOPERS, THE MCLEAN CITIZENS ASSOCIATION AND THE MCLEAN PLANNING COMMITTEE HAVE ACHIEVED AN AGREEMENT WITH THE DEVELOPERS THAT THE MCLEAN HOUSE WILL BE LIMITED TO TWELVE STORIES AND 544 TOTAL UNITS."

NARR: IN ITS VARIED ACTIVITIES, THE MCLEAN CITIZENS ASSOCIATION OVERSEES THE ENFORCEMENT OF A LAW LIMITING THE SIZE OF NEW COMMERCIAL SIGNS. IT PRESENTS RESIDENT'S OPINIONS TO THE VIRGINIA STATE HIGHWAY DEPARTMENT ON THE BUILDING OF NEW ROADS AND THE INSTALLATION OF TRAFFIC LIGHTS. IF NECESSARY, IT ORGANIZES CITIZENS' HEARINGS AND DRAFTS PETITIONS. THE PARK COMMITTEE OF THE ASSOCIATION DISCUSSES WITH THE COUNTY GOVERNMENT HOW THE RECREATION AREAS SHOULD BE DEVELOPED AND EQUIPPED. THE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION REVIEWS THE ACTIVITY OF THE SCHOOL SYSTEM AND MAKES BUDGET RECOMMENDATIONS. IN CARRYING OUT ITS PROGRAMS, THE ASSOCIATION CAN DRAW ON LARGE RESOURCES OF KNOWLEDGE AND TALENT AVAILABLE WITHIN THE COMMUNITY. HALF OF THE THIRTY-FOUR MEMBERS OF THE ASSOCIATION'S BOARD OF DIRECTORS ARE REPRESENTATIVES OF SMALL SUBDIVISIONS, EACH NUMBERING ABOUT 200 HOMES. THERE ARE THREE GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETINGS A YEAR AND THE OFFICERS ARE ELECTED IN THE SPRING BY SECRET BALLOTS. THE OFFICERS AND THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEET MONTHLY. THERE ARE NO PAID EMPLOYEES, EVERYONE DONATING HIS TIME

NARR: AND EFFORT TO THE AFFAIRS OF THE ASSOCIATION. AND TO
(CONT) PRESIDENT STELL, THE WORK OF THE ASSOCIATION REALLY IS
LOCAL SELF GOVERNMENT.

TAPE: CUT FOUR -- STELL

"OUR ASSOCIATION REPRESENTS THE ULTIMATE OF DEMOCRACY AT WORK. WE HAVE NO OFFICIAL CAPACITY WITH OUR GOVERNMENT, EITHER STATE OR LOCAL, AND YET WE HAVE WORKED FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE COMMUNITY FOR SO MANY YEARS THAT WE DO HAVE A LOT OF GOOD INFLUENCE IN OUR LOCAL GOVERNMENT ESPECIALLY AND ALSO THE STATE GOVERNMENT. SO THAT WE BRING THE VOICE OF THE PEOPLE TO OUR LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN A WAY THAT WOULD NOT BE POSSIBLE OUTSIDE OF A FORMALLY ORGANIZED TOWN."

ANNCR: THIS HAS BEEN DATELINE: WASHINGTON -- PICTURES IN SOUND OF PEOPLE, PLACES AND EVENTS HERE IN THE UNITED STATES, BROUGHT TO YOU BY THE VOICE OF AMERICA EACH WEEK AT THIS TIME. TODAY, YOU HEARD ABOUT THE MCLEAN CITIZENS ASSOCIATION.

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